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# ST LUKE AND A MODERN WRITER

A STUDY IN CRITICISM

A PRAELECTION DELIVERED BEFORE  
THE COUNCIL OF THE SENATE

BY

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## ST LUKE AND A MODERN WRITER

### LUKE I. 1—4.

ΕΠΕΙΔΗΠΕΡ πολλοὶ ἐπιχείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν περὶ τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων, καθὼς παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν οἱ ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου, ἔδοξε κάμοὶ παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς καθεξῆς σοι γράψαι, κράτιστε Θεόφιλε, ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφαλείαν.

“ Since many have undertaken to draw up a narrative about the facts which have been fully established among us, as those who were actual eye-witnesses and ministers of the matter delivered them, I too have thought good, most excellent Theophilus, after having followed all the circumstances from the very beginning with the utmost care, to present you with an orderly account in writing, that you may have certain information about the things you have been told by word of mouth.”

Among the books of the New Testament two stand by themselves. Their avowed object is to set forth facts, collected by their author, in literary form. He gathered his information, as he declares, from reliable sources. He was probably, if not certainly, a witness if not a principal actor, in some of the scenes which he depicts. For the facts outside his personal experience he relied on the testimony of the best authorities he could find. His preface, though not without parallels in antiquity, is strangely modern in tone, in claiming to present his little books as the result of laborious investigation.

But he was something more than a collector of facts. He possessed no little knowledge of the writer's craft. He was well aware of the value of using his material in such a way as to make his narrative attractive to his readers; and knew how to make the best of sources

which in less skilful hands would have seemed unpromising, judging well when to elaborate and when to touch lightly on a particular theme. He was also gifted with a great power of sympathy and adaptability. He could, when he chose, write like a man conversant with the world ; and, if the subject seemed to demand it, adopt the style and language of a prophet of the old covenant. He threw himself, as only a writer of genius can, into the characters he depicts, and makes them talk and write appropriately and naturally. Moreover he shews a remarkable sense of literary proportion. He sets himself a most difficult task—whether he accomplished it or not is impossible for us to decide—to describe in a very brief compass the great revolution in religion which his times had witnessed. He recognised the immense importance of the work of Jesus Christ during his ministry ; but he saw, as apparently none of his contemporaries did, that the story did not end when the Master was withdrawn from the Earth, soon, as was expected, to return in Glory. He perceived that Jesus had begun a work, which had been left to His followers to carry on ; and he proceeds to shew how this was accomplished. To do this he makes a comprehensive survey of that momentous period of history, from the Ascension to the arrival of St Paul in Rome, within the limits of what we should now describe rather as a pamphlet than as a book. Such is the author of the third Gospel and the Acts, whom the only available tradition says was Luke the friend and companion of the Apostle Paul.

The object of this lecture is to discuss how far such books as the third Gospel and the Acts can be considered as reliable history ; and it is my intention to confine my attention to the later work after making a few remarks on one point as to the method of the writer with regard to the third Gospel. As we have seen from the introduction, the book is avowedly a compilation of facts gathered with care and accuracy (*ἀκριβῶς*) from first-

hand oral sources. But modern investigations have shewn that Luke in all probability used a written source, if not our Gospel of St Mark, at any rate a document on which it is mainly based. Time will not permit me to discuss why I accept this conclusion, nor to enter into a disquisition as to the manner in which Luke adapted his Marcan material. Suffice it to say that he seems to have re-written much in deference to the literary tastes of his age and, perhaps, to recent events. He certainly allowed himself considerable freedom in transposing, amplifying, and even altering narratives and reported sayings of our Lord.

In the case of the Acts we have less guidance as to sources; for—even if St Paul's Epistles were known to his biographer, which is, to say the least, open to doubt—he does not seem to have made use of them for his narrative. In the case of the account of Herod Agrippa's death Luke may have had the *Antiquities* of Josephus before him; and in this case, regarding Herod, as he does, as a persecutor, whereas Josephus depicts him as a national hero, he gives the story a totally different complexion. But with this exception, setting aside the passages in which the first person plural is used, we can only make conjectures as to the material employed by him whether oral or written.

Since the days of Schnekenburger's book "On the Aim of the Acts of the Apostles" (1841), controversy has raged around the Lucan narrative, sometimes in favour, often against its value as an historical record. First the Tübingen school led by F. C. Baur carried all before them by pronouncing for the genuineness of the four great Pauline Epistles, comparing them with the Acts, and pronouncing the latter a story written with the purpose of proving that the antagonism of the Pauline and Petrine schools was imaginary, in order to foster a reconciliation between the two opposing parties. Then the Dutch school reversed the process,

and, by acclaiming the so-called "We" sections as genuine, sought to prove the writings of St Paul the work of churchmen of the second century. Harnack has more recently undertaken the defence of the authenticity rather than the credibility of Acts; whilst Ramsay has sought by his valuable researches in Asia Minor to prove that the accuracy of the author in matters of detail and his extraordinary topical knowledge, especially of Asia Minor, are a guarantee of the value of his record of events. The latest stage of the controversy has been opened by the publication of Norden's *Agnostos Theos*, the general tendency of which is to shew from Paul's speech at Athens, that Luke made use of the current literature of his age, in order to fashion appropriate utterances for the persons whom he introduces and to relate incidents in the conventional manner of his contemporaries.

It is, I confess, tempting to enter upon a disquisition as to the grandeur of the scheme of history our author proposed to himself, and to his manner of carrying it out. His merits, especially that of conciseness, and his defects, in leaving much unexplained and not a little of his narrative obscure, are worth careful consideration. But I must resist the temptation to enter upon this and other equally fascinating themes, and confine my remarks to the manner in which the author of the Acts used his sources, especially in one particular. The first impulse of Christianity was assuredly not literary. It emanated from One, who with all reverence it may be said, talked rather than wrote. His immediate followers, the eye witnesses and ministers of the word, are acknowledged to have been unlettered men without education (*ἄγραμματοι καὶ ἴδιωται*). We have abundance of evidence from the recently discovered *ostraka* and *papyri* what this meant in the first century A.D. For aught we know to the contrary the original "Mark" may have been a production so destitute of literary skill, that our

Gospel according to St Mark would appear a truly polished composition. It is an open question whether St Luke wrote his two works for the Church at large or for an individual friend. I confess I prefer the latter hypothesis, as simpler and more natural. Allow me, therefore, to assume that Luke was not engaged in producing official documents, nor in giving to the world a work intended for posterity—such attempts seldom endure for a generation and rarely survive a single edition; but that he was merely anxious to tell his story briefly and in such a manner as to interest Theophilus and the circle in which he moved. Let us suppose that he had, as he implied, conversed with people who told him what they knew with much simplicity, and read, not only official documents, but private papers, letters, etc., the work of men to whom writing was a difficulty, and any sort of composition laborious. Let us further imagine Theophilus an educated man, who had not leisure to study a number of documents and fragmentary stories; but desired to have the matter put before him in an attractive literary form. Finally, may we not assume that the object of Luke was to give his friend a treatise about Jesus which would make him desire to be His disciple, and another about the doings of the Church, calculated to encourage him by shewing how the work begun by the Master had progressed? Such an exercise of the imagination might help to explain the origin of the Gospel and the Acts and the character of each book.

By the purest accident I have been led myself to make a literary investigation, which appears to throw a light on the subject of the way in which some of the literature of the New Testament came into being. In the course of my researches I passed successively through the stages of absolute belief, scepticism as to details, positive incredulity, and, finally, as I believe, reached a tolerably just conclusion. It was a case in which tradition was

tolerably fresh but hardly any documents were available, till the kindness of friends and relatives put me in possession of papers unquestionably authentic which had been hitherto quite inaccessible.

In 1797, a woman was condemned to death for stealing a horse from her former master. Though compelled to prosecute, he behaved with great humanity, and joined with others in obtaining her reprieve. His wife interested herself greatly in the case, visited her frequently in prison, and, I think, firmly believed that she had made her see the error of her ways. But in an unlucky moment the woman's lover was taken to the same prison; and, on his liberation, he persuaded her to escape. By an act of extraordinary daring she climbed the wall, and, disguised as a man, fled to the coast and was there arrested. To escape from prison was death; and she was again condemned. Her speech in court made so extraordinary an impression that she was again reprieved; but condemned to transportation for life. Her mistress was indefatigable in visiting her in prison, and showed her extraordinary kindness. This time the woman's heart was deeply touched. She was deported to Australia; and from the penal settlement she wrote constant letters to her mistress, sending her every rarity she could collect from the district. It was believed that she married well, and died as lately as 1841.

The son of this benevolent lady wrote the story of the adventures of his mother's penitent, which became one of the most widely read books of the day. Even now it is in great demand, and touches a sympathetic chord in many a heart. It is confessedly one of the best pictures of life in the part of England wherein the scene is laid, and, despite the fact that the style makes it tedious to a modern reader, it has been a living book for more than seventy years.

What makes the story so popular is that the author declares it to be absolutely true, and uses language not

wholly unlike the opening words of the third Gospel.

“This simple history being a relation of facts, well known to many persons of the highest respectability still living in the country.” Again, “The public may depend upon the truth of the main features of this narrative: indeed most of the facts recorded were matters of public notoriety at the time of their occurrence.” Again, “Though all the documents relating to this extraordinary female are duly filed and preserved—and her own letters in her own handwriting have been transmitted for inspection to several enquirers, &c., &c.” Again, “The years of intercourse and passing of presents to and fro between the prosecutor and prisoner made a deep impression on his (the author’s) young heart.”

We have here echoes of such words as *αὐτόπται καὶ ἵπηρέται—άνωθεν παρηκολουθηκότι ἀκριβῶς—καθεκ ἔησ σοι γράφαι* and St Paul’s expression *ὸν γὰρ ἐστιν· ἐν γωνίᾳ πεπραγμένον τοῦτο.*

The author avowedly draws on his imagination for certain scenes; and the conversations are obviously his own composition. But he declares the fact to be correct, except for one particular, that he alters the married name of his heroine.

I cannot exactly say why I was prompted to investigate the truth of this narrative; and my first step was decidedly discouraging. It was proved conclusively that the author was totally wrong in supposing that his heroine had ever married; for on enquiry, I found that a copy of the certificate of her death and burial had been sent from Australia: and this took place in 1819.

Through the kindness of the head of his family I was allowed to use the note-book which the author had prepared in 1874, twenty-nine years after his book appeared, and three before his death at the age of eighty. In it I found conclusive proof that he believed in the truth of his story, including the marriage. He shews

himself in these purely private remarks confident that he has told the truth in his so-called romance, though admitting here and there that what he described was founded only on uncertain report. But in language which recalls words of the Church fathers he declares, "The author treasured up in his memory all that fell from his father or mother concerning all family events. . . In such a spirit of love are many things collected and done by many a good old author." In such a spirit did Irenæus write about Polycarp to Florinus!

This made me anxious to study his psychology. I knew that he was a man of blameless character and high repute, an honoured clergyman, and the father of a distinguished man of science. The tone of his writing is deeply religious, and his love and admiration for his mother everywhere apparent. Yet he seemed to have been guilty of writing a work of pure fiction and passing it off as truth. As I pursued my investigations the case against him grew blacker. In the first place, however, the foundations on which the story rested proved to be undoubtedly sound. The public records and the handbills issued agreed in confirming the facts of the horse stealing, the prison breaking, as well as the two condemnations to death followed by transportation. But I discovered (what had previously been unnoticed) that in the handbill issued in 1800 the escaped prisoner is described as about 38 years of age, whereas the author, doubtless to heighten his romance, makes her only 27. I am sorry to say that I can prove this; and, moreover, feel sure that he knew it. Thus it is most unlikely that she married in 1812, when she would have been fifty, and she had several children. Next I noticed in the report of her first arrest that she made a confession to the magistrate and affixed her mark to it, being unable to write. But at the time of her trial she writes long letters to her mistress and her relatives couched in admirable English. Doubts arose in my mind whether

the words "congratulations," "exultation," "realize," "recreations" could have been used by a peasant girl who had, as the author says, been brought up without any early education. During the three years which ensued she certainly learned to write; for there exists in a public institution a letter to her former mistress, well written, but atrociously spelt, ending with a request for a little money. This in the book appears in a style which the author himself might have adopted forty-five years later—the pathetic request for cash being suppressed as unworthy of the occasion. By the courtesy of a gentleman in the country I was permitted to copy extracts from some of her letters from Australia to her relatives which had been obtained by his father; and these were so illiterate as to be almost undecipherable. It seemed proved therefore that, though the author had used facts of public notoriety, he had professed to be possessed of documents which he had himself fabricated. With tradition I fared no better than with my documentary evidence. An aged man wrote to me that his mother had known the subject of my enquiries, and had been very indignant at such a character being held up as a misused female. He told me he had heard her called "that baggage." It was the same with her appearance. I was shewn a picture—I should judge made before the book was written—in which she appears, according to the author, in a bill offering a reward for her arrest "as tall, dark, and of an intelligent countenance." On the other hand a print from another portrait of perhaps an earlier date represents her, as the original but unsympathetic handbill describes her, "5 ft. 2in. in height, very dark, swarthy, and hard favoured." I confess that my prejudice against the author's veracity was still further increased by the fact that he sought to make one of his characters, avowedly the creation of his own brain, appear as an actual person by a display of remarkable local knowledge. He connects him with the man who discovered the use of

crag shells as manure ; and a reference to his native place in an early description of the country shows that the circumstances of this discovery, with the exception of the date, are absolutely correct.

Now I submit that had I been dealing with a book of ancient date I should have made an overwhelming case for its untrustworthiness. The argument from style would have been amply sufficient ; but, in addition to this, I have adduced not only public documents and traditions but actual letters in support of the conclusion that what was professedly a true story was actually a fabric of fiction erected on a very slight foundation of fact. Several before me have declared this to be the case ; but I have had access to evidence which was entirely unaccessible to the public. I ask you to imagine how powerful a case could be made, if these materials were at the disposal of our critics abroad and at home—which they assuredly are not—against the credibility of such a book as the *Acts of the Apostles*. Would one word of it be believed if the evidence I have brought forward in this case, or even a tithe of it, were producible. And, moreover, when I reached this stage of the enquiry I was assured on good authority that no more documents were in existence. The very grandson of the author wrote and told me that he did not think that any more letters could be found. One morning, however, a packet arrived from a granddaughter of the author saying that she had found some old letters and papers which might be of service to me. To my surprise it contained, not only the notes the author had made when he wrote his book, but the original letters. I discovered, on closer examination, that, though the letters he had published would be quite unrecognisable to the casual reader, they were evidently based on those in his possession. From his notes it was obvious that the public documents which I had seen were examined by him and found to be so meagre that they

had to be supplemented in order to make the account of the two trials readable, or even intelligible. It was evident that the mistake he had made about the marriage, which led him into serious trouble and nearly involved him in a law suit, was made with absolute *bonâ fides* and that most people at the time believed it. I could see that in rewriting the letters he had incorporated in them facts derived, not only from family tradition, but from his own personal knowledge. I was even compelled to acknowledge that the alteration of the heroine's age, though inexcusable in the face of the evidence of public documents, and one of her letters, which I am not absolutely certain he ever saw, could plead a certain amount of justification, due to mistaken identity; and I am still endeavouring to clear up this point.

I hope I can, by a few brief examples, shew how an illiterate letter can be rewritten, and in the editor's opinion, improved. Here is the convict's description of Australia:

"it is a very woodey countrey if i goo out any distence hear is going throw woods for miles. But they are very buttefull and very prettey I oneley wish my good Leddy i could send you one of the parrets for they are very buttefull. . . But [illegible] it mak me so very unwilling to send you one. But if i should continuer long in this countrey i sartenely will send you sum out of this wicked countrey for I must say this is the wickedes places i ever was in in all my life . . . wat is 8 shillens par Busshell."

Here is the same passage cast in literary form:

"The country is very woody so that I cannot go out any distance from Sidney without travelling through woods for miles. They are many of them very picturesque, and quite alive with birds of such exquisite plumage that the eye is constantly dazzled by them. I assure you, dear lady, that in taking a ramble through them

with my mistress and some of the elder orphans, etc. I wish I could send you one of the beautiful parrots of the country, but I have no means of doing so, etc. I grieve to say, my dear Lady, that this is one of the wickedest places in the world. I never heard of one, excepting those of Sodom and Gomorrah, which could come up to it in evil practices. People are so bold, so shameless and so sinful, that even crime is as familiar as fashion in England."

The author knew his public. He perceived that the poor woman's letter, which if read as it is spelt would reproduce the cadence of her native tongue, would not be appreciated, that the ordinary reader would not perceive that underlying the simple sentences were love and gratitude and a desire to amend her life. He wished, moreover, to inform his readers that she was employed by the mistress of an orphanage, and therefore he supplements her letter by an allusion to the fact.

Does not this comparison suggest a possible solution of some New Testament difficulties? It is almost impossible to believe, for example, that the speeches and epistles of St Peter really represent the language of the Apostle; much less the Epistle of James, with its evident knowledge of the Greek wisdom literature of Judaism. And when one reads some of the correspondence of the Roman confessors in the collection of Cyprian's letters one sees how illiterate many Christians, even in prominent positions, were in the third century; and may we not suppose the possibility of genuine letters of apostles having been in existence which have come down to us in literary forms, in which some of the spirit, if little of the form, has survived? I often wonder whether some of the passages in these writings which have caused untold perplexity to scholars, for example, I. Peter iii. 18ff. James iii. 6 (*τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως*), are not really literary insertions intended to display the pious erudition of some unknown adapter. And I venture to say that students

in all ages are frequently misled by the disregard of such simple methods as I am suggesting in this lecture.

Another point of interest I should like to raise is that of a literary editor in his attempt to translate an illiterate document into good language completely missing the meaning of the writer. Let me take but two examples. Here is a sentence from a letter: "Elizabeth Kellett lives very near to me, and is very well. She and I were both taken off the stores on the same day. We have not to go to government work *as the horses do*: but we have both obtained respectable places, and I hope we shall continue in them."

Now can we not easily picture the perplexity the allusion to "horses" would raise if this occurred in a sacred book, and the applause with which each new textual emendation would be welcomed. How tame is the real solution of the mystery! Let me quote the original:

"Elizabeth Kellett live very neear to me and do very well shee is of the stors so as wee and not (illegible) a Bout after work for goverment Lik Horseas we are free from all hard work."

I take this to mean no more nor less than, "We have not to work like horses for the Goverment." The other example is a mere trifle. The writer speaks of "whiskeys and shay cartes." The editor calls the latter "clay carts."

There are in the Acts several sentences and words which are to us unintelligible, and, perhaps, were so to the writer of the book himself, owing to the fact that he used some thoroughly illiterate source. For instance, there is in the prayer in iv. 25 the untranslatable passage *δέ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου στόματος Δανειὸς παιδός σου*; viii. 7, *πολλοὶ τῶν ἔχόντων πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα βοῶντα φωνὴ μεγάλη ἐξήρχοντο*. There are words like *ἀπελεγμός* (xix. 27), *δεξιολάβοι* (xxiii. 23), &c., which may have been introduced for this reason. These do not make any material difference: in some cases the sense is fairly

obvious, but if an explanation is needed it may perhaps be sought in the manner I have ventured to indicate.

To return to my subject. The investigation of the material used by the author of my document appears to afford sufficient proof that as far as he was able he gave a true account; but that between the events he records and the date of publication a good deal had become obscure, and he made one or more serious blunders. Still, he possessed a thoroughly honest, if not very scholarly or critical mind; and for this reason he is interesting as illustrating the difficulty of telling the precise facts for a writer who, though he has good documents and excellent traditions, has an eye to style and literary arrangement.

It may well, however, be asked whether I am justified in treating so great a subject as an important section of the New Testament in this manner. You may say that it is, to say the least, indiscreet to compare the methods of the writer, whose work has obtained its most enduring popularity with, perhaps, uneducated readers, with the literature on which the Christian faith is built. I can only reply that, with my humble material, I am trying to indicate a new line of investigation. I have been but lately reading an unpublished statement of a distinguished foreign scholar, as to why he cannot accept the Lucan authorship of the Acts. The case is put by him with remarkable fairness; and his arguments from his standpoint are, to me at least, extremely convincing. But the weak point seems to be that he starts, as everybody else has done, with the idea that the author ought to have supplied a good deal of information which he has suppressed; and evidently failed to explain various things we do not understand. In other words, this scholar, like most of us, has yielded to the temptation, first to imagine what ought to have been written, and then to judge the work by the assumptions he has made. It seems a better way of going to work to start, if it be possible, not from

assumptions, which we almost always have to do in the case of an ancient document, but from some definite material: and a modern book is better than nothing. What I have done is what every student of the New Testament would do if he could—namely, I have taken a book, and, as far as possible, tried to get at the author's sources. Small as my success has been, we can never hope for any similar success in regard to the literature of the Early Church. I have, however, discovered in a tale based on tradition, public and private documents and notorious facts, all the features which scholars recognize in the composition of St Luke's second treatise; the tradition, as acknowledged by the mention of eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, the use of official reports (Claudius Lysias' letter, the speech of Tertullus, etc.), private records like the "We" sections, to which we must perhaps add free compositions as in the case of many speeches, which the author under no circumstances could have heard, and narratives embellished with literary skill and sometimes with a certain conventionality. We have seen how a writer may feel at liberty to use documents with freedom, in order to adapt them to the taste of his public, and to commend his book to a larger circle of readers. The great dissimilarity between the modern and ancient books which we are discussing lies in this; that, whereas the modern writer had to write a large book on a small basis of fact, St Luke set himself the far more difficult task of compressing a vast amount of material into the smallest possible compass. We may complain that he has told us too little on certain points, but we cannot fail to confess that he has achieved the almost impossible by making his short histories full of interest.

I will now proceed to apply some of my principles of investigation to one of the crucial passages of the Acts—the fifteenth chapter, which relates the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem, giving the letter to the Gentile Churches. I need hardly remind you of the fact that there is a very

serious discrepancy between what St Paul says in his letter to the Galatians and St Luke's account in this place. Nor need I do more than assert that in the whole Pauline literature this letter is completely ignored. To explain the difficulty has been a hopeless task to every scholar who has made the attempt; and almost every solution involves us in new perplexities. But may not some light be thrown on this dark place if we acknowledge that an author may have, without any intention of fraud, read his own meaning into a document of which he gives the substance. From Galatians I certainly gather that St Paul did come to some sort of understanding with the elder Apostles at Jerusalem. He was to go to the Gentiles, Peter to the Jews. When the Apostles met at Antioch the subject of their dispute had certainly to do with how much deference should be paid to Jewish prejudices. But in Acts we have a decree made and then embodied in a letter, of which it is incredible to many that Paul could ever have been aware; nor does it seem probable to us that, even if he had been, he would have agreed to it. The decree itself has been a constant source of difficulty; and no one, so far as I know, has yet given a satisfactory explanation. As it stands it may be either an injunction to the newly converted heathen to observe the moral law or to respect certain Jewish prejudices in regard to food. Now I suggest that the letter, as it now appears in Acts, is not likely to have been the form in which the Apostolic decision was promulgated. An examination of its language shews that it is characteristic of the author of Acts; and it is not incredible that he had some record of the proceedings of the assembly, couched in language which he himself imperfectly understood. In transcribing it he may have made what was quite clear to the older Apostles and St Paul well nigh incomprehensible; or he may have embodied in his version of the letter some local agreement between Gentile and Jewish Christians known to him. At any rate it is conceivable

to me that, were we to know the circumstances, all the difficulties involved in the injunction to Gentile Christians to abstain from "things offered to idols and things strangled, &c.," might have a far simpler solution than we now suppose. Whatever be the real meaning of the famous "decree," it has no bearing on the life or conduct of a modern Christian, and our interest in it is rather antiquarian than practical.

The day when good men deplored the severe literary criticism of what is to us a very sacred book indeed is passed: and yet more so the idea that all who presumed to enter upon such a task were enemies of religious truth. Nevertheless, I am one of those who believe that the days of what we now call advanced criticism are over: and that when we are again called upon to teach the study of the scriptures, much once declared to be "the assured results of modern scholarship" will be pronounced obsolete. I do not mean that we shall contemptuously brush aside all that the scholarship of the 19th century achieved, or fail to use all it did in the way of opening up roads for fresh enquiry. Even though a violent reaction in the matter of theology were the result of the cataclysm, in which the world is involved, I cannot believe in its permanence. But it is more than possible that our methods of inquiry will be very different from those hitherto adopted. For one thing I cannot but believe that, in England at least, many of the controversies about the scriptures have been, like some Homeric battles, over a dead body. Inspiration, as our ancestors explained it, has no life in it. We have been making the difference between orthodox and heterodox on points of belief, which do not have the slightest effect on our lives whether we profess to accept or reject them. We are learning by sad experience what are fundamentals, and what are mere adjuncts to our Christianity; and when we really make the distinction we shall benefit by the lesson.

But it is the methods which have been pursued that

we shall have to modify most; for, as is often the case, the views of those professedly "advanced" have by becoming popular become stereotyped. We, by our deference to the vast modern school of critics and commentators, have tended to lose the right to be guided by our own commonsense. Scholars seem to be growing more and more afraid of coming to an independent judgment because of the accumulating weight of an academic authority, which in some countries has first put orthodoxy out of court, and then made originality conform to rules of its own invention. It was not without reason that Blass complained of the *theologer*. In Cambridge we are allowed to live in a free atmosphere; whether our young men in future will be permitted to thrive if they wish to develope on their own lines is another question—I trust they may be. But we shall have in future to shew our independence of subjective criticism, on however weighty authority it rests; and to work, where we have not facts to guide us, by the exercise of our independent judgment. If we do not act thus we shall find ourselves in the position of theologians before the Reformation—fettered by a new scholasticism, and praying, perhaps in vain, for a new Erasmus to arise and set us free.

There is one result that I believe will be the outcome of the future study of the scriptures, when we understand the circumstances under which they were written more fully. The author, to whom I have made so many allusions, wrote with the pious object of honouring the memory of his mother, whose unselfish exertions saved a poor woman from despair, and made her become a useful member of society. But when his work has been stripped of all ornamentation, the truth proves finer than fiction. When the handsome, spirited girl becomes "the hard favoured" woman, aged about 38, the romance, perhaps, disappears, but the kindness of the lady, busy with a large household and numerous family, is enhanced

as we think of her standing by her poor servant at her two trials, teaching and helping her in her long imprisonment, and never forgetting her for years in the convict settlement. Nor does the servant lose when we know the truth. In her simple, awkwardly expressed letters, we find not the somewhat effusive penitent of romance, not the woman who was self-educated to write in pompous literary language: but a poor convict trying to keep straight under great difficulties, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, in letters which, despite their simplicity of diction and crude spelling, reveal a singularly observant character, and are far better unadorned than when improved by literary artifice. We find, moreover, that the author was at times mistaken, and sometimes failed to give the right impression, but was yet thoroughly honest; and where critics saw only pure romance, those who could ascertain the facts find a substratum of true history.

May it not be that underlying a book like the Acts there is a story, simpler it may be than the one we now have: but even more wonderful? That we have, for instance, but a faint portrayal of the actual Paul, whose works and speeches may have been less dramatic than Luke represents them, but whose character would appear greater, were he to be presented in the cold light of actuality. May it not even be that the Jesus of the very earliest gospel was more human than the reverence of the second generation of His followers dared to represent Him; yet, in truth, more Divine? Perhaps we have hitherto tended, rather to worship Him as an abstraction, than to follow Him as a real Master; and that those who have, as was once frequently asserted, exposed the Sacred Scriptures to profane treatment, have, possibly unknowingly, done the work that our age most needs and brought men to a Christ, not only supreme in Heaven, but man's great Exemplar upon earth.

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